

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 139

Commending Dr. William Ferguson Reid.

Agreed to by the House of Delegates, January 11, 2008
 Agreed to by the Senate, January 17, 2008

WHEREAS, Dr. William Ferguson Reid, native son, was born on March 18, 1925, in Richmond; and WHEREAS, Dr. William Ferguson Reid was educated in the Richmond public schools, and prevailing against the obstacles imposed by Jim Crow laws, he earned his undergraduate degree at Virginia Union University, and his medical degree from the Howard University School of Medicine; and

WHEREAS, after receiving his medical degree, with very few hospitals in the United States accepting African Americans, he interned and was a surgical resident at Homer G. Phillips Hospital in St. Louis before entering the military, serving his country with distinction in the United States Marine Corps in the 1st Marine Division in Korea and later at the United States Naval Hospital at Bethesda; and

WHEREAS, in 1955 Dr. William Ferguson Reid established a private surgical practice in Richmond, where he practiced for 27 years prior to serving as a regional medical officer with the United States Department of State; and

WHEREAS, as the first African-American surgeon in Richmond, Dr. William Ferguson Reid weathered many barriers to practice his profession; he was rejected for membership in the medical society due to his race; he was denied staff privileges at area hospitals because staff privileges were extended only to members of the medical society; and because he was unable to practice in local hospitals, he could not obtain the requisite recommendations of five area surgeons to apply for board certification until the staffs of area hospitals were desegregated; and

WHEREAS, Dr. William Ferguson Reid led the fight to desegregate medicine in Richmond, opening doors for African-American physicians to membership in local, state, and national medical education associations and societies; and

WHEREAS, after his retirement as a regional medical officer, Dr. William Ferguson Reid embarked upon a career as an addictionologist, becoming a certified specialist in addictive diseases; and

WHEREAS, during the period of Massive Resistance, Dr. William Ferguson Reid continued his struggle against injustice by working with others to register and elect more African Americans, and as a result of his efforts, the Crusade For Voters, one of the most formidable political organizations in Virginia, was organized in 1956, and candidates emerged who were willing to stand for election as council members, and for the school board, Congress, and the General Assembly of Virginia; and

WHEREAS, after one unsuccessful attempt to win public office, on his second try, Dr. William Ferguson Reid, was elected in 1967 to represent the 35th House District, consisting of Henrico County and the City of Richmond, in the House of Delegates of Virginia, becoming the first African American elected to the General Assembly of Virginia since Reconstruction; and

WHEREAS, Dr. William Ferguson Reid served three terms in the House of Delegates, and during his tenure was a member of the House Committees on Chesapeake and Its Tributaries; Corporations, Insurance and Banking; General Laws; and Labor, of which he also served as chairman; and

WHEREAS, as a member during those times, Dr. William Ferguson Reid, enduring with dignity and grace the very exclusion that he had fought to eradicate in open society, pressed on with his cause of equality and freedom and was instrumental in desegregating the page system to provide opportunities to minorities and females to serve as pages in the General Assembly; and

WHEREAS, Dr. William Ferguson Reid is actively involved in numerous civic, medical, political, and community organizations, graciously giving of his time and talents; and

WHEREAS, upon being asked to share his wisdom with the generations that would follow him, Dr. William Ferguson Reid offered that success requires committed and diligent long-range planning, listening without a judgmental ear, a willingness to do what is best for the people you serve, and respecting and appreciating the freedoms we enjoy because they were wrought at tremendous sacrifice and should not be taken lightly; and

WHEREAS, we salute Dr. William Ferguson Reid, a remarkable Virginian, for his fortitude and perseverance in overcoming seemingly insurmountable obstacles and his life is worthy of emulation; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That the General Assembly hereby commend Dr. William Ferguson Reid, outstanding physician, groundbreaking civil rights activist, community leader, and former member of the General Assembly of Virginia; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the House of Delegates prepare a copy of this resolution

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for presentation to Dr. William Ferguson Reid as an expression of the General Assembly's respect, admiration, and esteem for his exceptional service to the Commonwealth and its people.